

Great Britain 1716
George I
A
SPEECH

Made in the
HOUSE of COMMONS

APRIL the 24th 1716;

Against the BILL for the REPEAL of the

TRIENNIAL ACT,

And for enlarging the Time of
Continuance of PARLIAMENTS.

Never before Printed.

*With great Submission I speak it, in my poor Opinion,
King, Lords, and Commons can no more continue
a Parliament beyond its natural Duration, than
they can make a Parliament.*

Vid. Sir Robert Raymond's Speech, Hist. Regist. p. 396

L O N D O N :

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Made in the

HOUSE OF COMMONS



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THE
PUBLISHER
TO THE
READER.

THE following Speech made the 24th, Day of April, in the Year 1716. against the Prolongation of the Parliament, is not pretended to be exactly as it was spoke; the Gentleman who heard it, having only taken Notes of the most material Parts thereof; and from these helps to his Memory, soon after reduced it into Writing, in the Form it now appears, with Intent to Publish it. But several Speeches upon the same Occasion having been soon after Printed, this was thought the less necessary at that Time; but the Publisher believes it may now be very acceptable to all Lovers of their Country, many things therein taken Notice of
suing,

ii T H E P R E F A C E.

the present Juncture of Affairs; and may suggest to the Minds of the People, on the approaching Choice of a new Parliament, several Particulars, which that Gentleman delivered, with a sort of prophetic Impulse.

The Publisher is very inclinable to think, that if the Arguments of that Gentleman, and those who concurred with him had prevailed, the fatal South-Sea Scheme had never been established, and that if his Proposals in Relation to the Payment of the Publick Debts, had been attended to, the Nation had been in a happier Situation than it at present is.

The Publisher begs Pardon of the Gentleman for publishing so much to Disadvantage, what was delivered in a much better Manner; but, believes, tho' he should have not exactly recollected his Words, he has not mistaken his Meaning, nor omitted any Passage material, to shew the Force of the Argument on either side; and the Spirit of a truly honest British Patriot.





A

S P E E C H

Made in the

House of Commons,

Against the REPEALING the

T R I E N N I A L A C T .

Mr. SPEAKER,

I Cannot content myself in the great Question now before you, to deliver my Opinion barely by Voting in it; for I think it of that Importance to the Nation, to deserve and need the most thorough Examination. I heartily wish it might have had a much longer Time of Consideration than I perceive Gentlemen are dispos'd to give it; but since we are enter'd on the Debate of it, I shall endeavour to express my Thoughts about it with great plainness and Freedom.

My present Opinion, Sir, according to the best Judgment I am able to form, is, That if we should give our Consent to the passing of the Bill before us into a Law, we should be guilty of a most notorious *Breach* of the *Trust* reposed in us, by those who sent us hither, and shou'd make a very dangerous Step towards the *Undermining* of that Constitution, which our Ancestors have been so careful to preserve, and thought no Expence, either of Blood or Treasure, too much for that purpose, and under which we do yet enjoy those Privileges and Advantages, which no other Nation in the World can at this Day boast of.

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This is the Light in which the Bill yet appears to me; and therefore if I did believe what some Gentlemen do, That it would be conducive to several Good Ends, yet that would not be sufficient to gain my Consent thereto; for I cannot think those Ends, however desirable, equivalent to such a Price, as that of giving up, or even of making a dangerous advance towards the giving up, entirely, the BRITISH CONSTITUTION. Much less would I give my Consent to such a Law, when I am of Opinion, That it would be so far from contributing to the Ends pretended to be aimed at thereby, that it would have the direct contrary Effect: And if we are not *to do Evil that Good may come of it*, surely we must not *do evil*, only to bring *Mischief* upon ourselves.

These are my Reasons against the Bill, That our Consent to it would be a Breach of Trust, and a dangerous Breach upon our Constitution; and that, if it were not liable to this Objection, That yet it would serve to purposes directly contrary to those pretended to be aim'd at, by Gentlemen who are for the Bill; I shall endeavour to explain my self in these Points.

Give me leave therefore to mention, what appears to me to have been the *ancient* Constitution of Parliament, and also how the same has been, and stands chang'd at this time, with relation to the Matter which is now the Subject of our Debate. I believe it will, say, it must be agreed, That before the Reign of *Henry VIII.* there was no single Instance of a *Prorogation* of Parliament: That Parliaments had only one Sessions, and those generally, very short ones, none of which ever lasted a Year: That to prevent the Mischief of long Intervals of Parliament, It was Enacted in the Fourth Year of *Edward III.* That *Parliaments should be holden annually*, and this was confirmed by subsequent Acts of Parliament: And therefore I may venture to affirm, That by the Ancient Constitution, Parliaments were to be holden frequently, and to be of the Continuance only of one Sessions, and that there was no right or Power in the Crown to Prorogue the same: I say, this I can affirm on the same Foundation, and with as strong Reason, as I can affirm, That the Eldest Son, after the Death of his Father, shall inherit, as Heir at Law, the Lands in Fee-simple; or that the Youngest Son shall Inherit, where the Custom of *Borough-English* prevails; or that all the Sons shall equally inherit the Lands of *Gavel-kinds*; or, indeed, as I can affirm of any part of the Common-Law, or the particular Usages of the Kingdom, for these are Supported only by constant Practice, and Prescription immemorial; and they neither need, nor can have a stronger Support than this; for surely of all Laws, those must be allowed to carry with them the strongest Evidence of Justice, which have been always submitted to, without any Change or Alteration.

The Application is obvious to the Point in Debate, I mean, as far as the Reign of *Henry* the Eighth: And if at that Time this was the Constitution of Parliament, it will not be easie to shew how

how the same has been since Legally chang'd; but I shall speak to this more fully, after I have answer'd an Objection which has been made. It has been said, " That 'tis no Proof that the Crown had no Power to Prorogue Parliaments, and to continue the same Parliament for several Sessions, altho' there were no Instances thereof, until the Reign of *Hen. the Eighth*". If this Objection have any Weight, it will equally hold against any other part of the Common Law, which hath hitherto remained uncontested: For may not the Younger Sons, in this way of Reasoning, say, That altho' there be no Instance, that any of them have hitherto claimed to inherit, equally with the Eldest, the Lands in Fee-simple, that yet this is no Proof against their Right of making such a Claim, and having it determin'd for them. And if such a Case shou'd be brought into *Westminster-Hall*, it is evident, that there is no Act of Parliament which settles the point, nor any preceding Resolution, because the Matter was never in question before; and yet surely no Gentleman will affirm, that the Judges would be at liberty to determine this as a new Case, whatever Equity they might conceive in the Pretensions of the Younger Sons, but wou'd be strictly ty'd to adjudge according to the constant and uninterrupted Usage. And had the Lords and Commons, when the first Attempt of Proroguing was made upon them, insisted, That the Crown had no such Power, and the Opinion of the Judges had been required therein, it was impossible that they could have determined otherwise, than according to the constant Usage, or that they would have adjudged such an Original Power in the Crown, which had never been exerted from the earliest mention which our Records, or History, make of Parliaments, to that very Day; or that they could have conceiv'd it possible, that the Crown could have had such a Power, and yet never have asserted it in one single Instance, in the Course of so many Hundred Years.

If the Facts I have mention'd are, as they appear to me to be, undeniably true, the Inference I thence make, is next to a Demonstration; and I may venture to add, That there is no part of our Laws built on a more solid Foundation, and supported with stronger Reasons: Reasons, which must eternally have the greatest Weight, and make the deepest Impression, on the Minds of a People, who have any *Sense of Liberty*; and, Thanks be to God! we are yet a *Free Nation*. For without the Frequency of Parliaments, the Opportunity of Redressing those Grievances, which more or less have happened in all Reigns, from the Influence and Administration of *Evil Counsellors*, and *Wicked Ministers*, who will always prefer their own private Interests and sinister Views, to the Honour of their Prince, and Welfare of their Country: And it is to the Dread which such *impious Monsters* have always had, I hope will ever have, of the *just Vengeance of a Parliament*, that we hitherto owe the Preservation of our Liberties; for, had the Times of being called to an Account in Parliament

been at any considerable Distance, the *Attempts* of bold and daring Men would have had no Curb; and indeed 'tis but one Step more, and that not difficult, from a LONG, to the entire *disuse* of Parliaments, and resolving the Government into an absolute Monarchy; but I will urge this Point no farther, because I believe 'twill be generally allowed; and that, whatever might be the private Opinion of any particular Person, no Briton will be yet so hardy as to declare himself against the *Necessity* of frequent Parliaments.

I wish Gentlemen would as generally concur, that the other Part which I have mentioned, and I think have made appear, to have been our Antient Constitution, were as absolutely necessary to the Preservation of our Liberties; I mean Parliaments of one Sessions, not only frequent, but frequent NEW PARLIAMENTS. The Thing indeed appears very evident to me; so Evident, that in my poor Opinion, our Liberties would not be more, nay not so precarious under an absolute Monarchy, as with a House of Commons who had right to sit either for many Years together, or without any Limitation of Time: For 'tis certain, that a Prince, who had stood only on the Bottom of his own absolute Authority, assisted with a few Ministers and some Troops, would still think himself pretty much upon his good Behaviour towards the united Body of his People; and would (probably) be cautious of exerting his Power in such a manner, as to give a just Provocation to a general Revolt, and setting up another in his stead; but a Prince, with a Parliament at his Devotion, would be infinitely more terrible, and, with much greater Security, might give a Loose to every Extravagancy of Power; for when the Representatives of the People, who are chosen by them to be the Guardians of their Liberties, can be prevailed on, for little Advantages to themselves, to betray their Trust, and come into all the Measures of a designing Ministry, 'tis then, indeed, that the Liberties of a People are in the most imminent Danger; and surely, there is great Reason to apprehend that a House of Commons might soon become every obsequious to a Ministry, if they were to sit for a long Period, or without Limitation, and that there were no near Day in view, of a new Election, when the Conduct of Gentlemen in this Place would be enquired into in their respective Countries.

I believe it will not be denied, That 'tis very possible for a Ministry, by *Pensions* and *Employments* to some, and by the Expectations rais'd in others, and by the Corruption of Electors, and returning Officers, to obtain a very great Majority, entirely and blindly at their Devotion, even at the very first Meeting of a Parliament, and that by a Committee of Elections and other proper Helps, their Party may daily encrease; and that such a Parliament may be so far from protecting the Liberties of their Country, or from being a Terror to evil Ministers, as to become themselves the Tools of Oppression in the Hand of such a Ministry, and by their Authority, to consecrate the worst of Actions, to de-

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clare every honest Patriot, who has the Courage to attempt to stem the Tide of Wickedness, and to stand up for the Liberties of his Country, to be its greatest Enemy; and those who are ready to give it up, to be the only true Friends of our Constitution; and if this should ever happen to be our Case, I beg Gentlemen to consider, *whether a greater Curse could fall on any People, than to have such a Parliament as THIS entail'd upon them.*

I remember very well, what an Outcry was raised against the last Parliament, on a Suspicion only, that a Repeal of the *Triennial Act* was intended, and the Arguments against it without Doors, were then the very same with those which are now urg'd against it within: What an Inconsistency must it then appear, to see those very Gentlemen, who were then the most zealous Opposers of such an Attempt, become now the most *violent Advocates* for it? And will it not also in some measure affect their Integrity, publicly to own, that the Arguments they pretended to be then influenced by, had not the least Weight with them; and that the Thing in it self was very desirable, when there should be a good Ministry and Parliament in Being, and pernicious only in the then Situation of Affairs? It was not certainly from this Consideration, that the late Ministry and Parliaments were diverted from the Attempt; They, doubtless, had a very good Opinion of themselves, and were confirmed therein by the *Voice* of a great *Majority* of the *People*, and which, by a most strange and unaccountable Witchcraft, still continues in their Favour, if I may depend upon what several who have argued for the Bill seem to have agreed to.

I must beg, Gentlemen, to consider, that the Mischief I have mentioned, will be no ways prevented by the present Posture of our Affairs; for tho' we may have now a good Ministry and Parliament, their Continuance, notwithstanding the intended Law, will still depend on the Pleasure of the Prince; for, I do not perceive that any Gentleman will move for a Clause to continue the Ministry for Life; or that the Parliament shall not be dissolved without their own Consents; and if, by ill Advice to his Majesty, a Change should happen, may it not so fall out, that a long Continuance of a new Ministry and Parliament, may be of infinite Prejudice to the Nation: Surely, therefore, it will be Wisdom, in the making of this, or any other Law, not to consider some little present Conveniency, but the general and obvious Tendency of the same. I therefore think that I am yet warranted to say, and shall say it, 'till I am convinced that I have mistaken the Matter, That *frequent new Parliaments* was the *Antient Constitution*; That untill the Reign of *Henry the Eighth*, there was no stronger Evidence for any Part of the Common Law, than there was for this Part of our Constitution; and that the same was built, and stands upon as solid a Foundation, as any Law ever did, or can do, being absolutely necessary and *essential to the Liberties of a Free People.*

It is true, *Henry* the Eighth in the 21st Year of his Reign, prorogued the Parliament, which was the first Instance of this kind, and succeeding Princes have, more or less, continued the same Practice; but I can no wise agree, to what some Gentlemen would thence infer, That the CROWN HAD ALWAYS A RIGHT TO DO SO; for I think I have made the contrary very evidently appear; and that untill the 21st Year of *Henry* the Eighth, no part of our Common Law was better establish'd than this Antient *English* Constitution of frequent new Parliaments; but it is remarkable, that this having been the first Instance of a Prorogation, it was thought convenient to strengthen the further Continuance of that Parliament by Adjournment also: If the Crown before the Time I have mentioned, had not the Power of continuing the same Parliament by Prorogations; it will not be easy to shew, how they have come legally by it since: Sure I am, that there is no Act of Parliament which vests any such Power in the Crown, and Prescription immemorial is not so much as pretended to. The short of the Matter seems to me then, no more than this; A very Arbitrary Prince, the better to serve the Ends he had then in View, boldly invades the Liberties of his People, and usurps a new Prerogative, unheard of before: That Parliament tamely submits thereto, either out of Fear, or for better Reasons; perhaps, they were pleased with a longer Continuance, and the agreeable Prospect of sharing in the Advantages of Laws, which they were afterwards to make, I mean, the Dissolution of Abbeys; and altho' thereby the Foundation of our happy Reformation was laid, yet that is entirely owing to another Cause, and in no wise to the pious Intentions, either of that Prince, or of that Parliament. This new Prerogative was at first used with much Caution, and thereby the fatal Tendency thereof was not so soon discovered; and when the Possession of this Power became strengthened in the Crown by a Continuance of Time, and the Acquiescence of the Nation, it was much more difficult to get rid of the Innovation, than it was at first to have prevented the same; and it has been, I presume, thought more prudent, to continue our Acquiescence, whilst the Inconveniencies were in any Measure supportable, rather than to endeavour to retrieve this most valuable Part of our Ancient Constitution by Force of Arms; altho' this Remedy hath been resorted to frequently, and on much slihter Occasions in my Opinion.

But I cannot see, that from a Power so assum'd, and so continued, it will follow, either that the Ancient Constitution was so, or that it ought to be so at this Day; and I must say, that whatsoever Arguments can be brought to support that Doctrine, will equally justify the Exercise of any other Part of Arbitrary Power; for upon the starting up of any new Prerogative, 'tis but saying, That the Crown had always a Right to it, altho' it was never claimed or exercised before; and there may be *Parliaments com-*

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plaisant enough to acquiesce therein, which perhaps might be ashamed, by a new express Law, barefac'd and unmask'd, to give up the Liberties of their Country; and I do not see, but that this would be as good a Commencement for any new Prerogative, as the Power of proroguing at first had. Let Gentlemen consider, what the Antient Laws of *England* were, in the Matter of Imprisonments, and what the Practice was for some time before the Act of *Habeas Corpus*. I hope there is no *Briton*, so abandoned to the Notions of Slavery, as to affirm, that it ever was by the Laws of *England*, in the Power of the Prince to imprison any of his Subjects during his Will and Pleasure, and without any Reasons assigned: They were to be imprisoned only, when legally charg'd with Crimes, and were to be either try'd for the same, or releas'd from their Imprisonment, in a reasonable time; and as to this, the Act of *Habeas Corpus* was not introductive of a new Law, but declarative only of the Old; this is so essential to the Being of a free People, that it must be agreed, that our Law was always thus; I am sure, without it, our Condition would differ little from the Slavery of *Turkey* for the *Bow-string* itself, a speedy Death, is *Mercy*, when compar'd to a *Lingring Confinement*. And yet 'tis certain, that before the Act of *Habeas Corpus*, the good Subjects of *England* were sometimes thus Arbitrarily and Illegally imprisoned, to gratify the Avarice, Ambition, Malice, or Revenge of *evil Counsellors* and *wicked Ministers*; and the Advocates for *Prerogative* did as strictly insist on the Legality of this Power, as they did on any other, which was claim'd by the Crown. I cannot indeed tell how long this Power of Arbitrary imprisoning had been exercis'd, but I'm apt to believe it may vie for Antiquity, with the Power of *Proroguing Parliaments*.

I must also put Gentlemen in mind of the *Prerogatives* claim'd and exercis'd by King *James* the Second, to dispense with the Laws, to command our Bishops and Clergy to read in their Churches his illegal Proclamations, and to suspend and imprison them for disobeying, with many others of the like kind, which are recited by the Claim of Rights; and 'tis certain, that had we not been rescued by the Revolution, all these and many more, had been good *Prerogatives* at this Day, and might have been all of them supported with as good Arguments, as any can be used for the Power of *Proroguing* in the Reign of *Henry* the Eighth; and some of them with as good, nay, with the very same Arguments as are used for the Legality of the Power at this very Time. I hope therefore we shall be very cautious of admitting such Arguments, as tend naturally to support all Extravagancies of Power whatsoever, and to let in upon us an Inundation of Oppressions.

In the late Reigns, and in particular by the long Pensionary Parliament, in the Reign of *Charles* the Second, the Nation became very sensible of the mischievous Consequences, which had already happened

happened, and the more fatal which might still result from the dangerous Breach which had been made in our ancient Constitution: It was now evident to the meanest Capacity, That a Designing Prince, who, with the Assistance of a Wicked Ministry, should be able, after several Tryals, at last to procure a Parliament to his purpose, wou'd have the Liberties of his People entirely in his Power, and might govern them at Pleasure; from which State of Slavery it was as evident, that nothing less than a Revolution cou'd rescue them; and if they fail'd in that Experiment, that then their Chains wou'd be rivetted for ever. Under this melancholly Prospect of Affairs the Nation groan'd, and Complaints were heard in every Corner of our Streets; and even the *very Pensioners* in that Parliament were not arriv'd to such a pitch of Impiety, as to take pleasure in the *Drudgery* they had engag'd in, but acted with Reluctancy and Remorse, and as we have been very lately told in this Place, betrayed the Cause they had so wickedly espous'd, and frequently gave notice to the Friends of *England*, of the Attempts which were to be made on the Liberties of their Country. This *Pensionary Parliament* was at last Dissolv'd, but on what Views, and by what Advice, I will not pretend to say. Certain it is, that that Prince never had it afterwards in his Power, in a *Parliamentary way*, to destroy the Liberties of the People. The *Resumption* of *Charters* was then put in practice, with many other Expedients, towards the Establishment of an Absolute Monarchy, which had been long in view: But by the Death of that Prince, and the unskilful Conduct of his next Successor, an End was put to those Designs for that time, the People having unanimously applied the only Remedy in such Cases, and this brought about the late happy Revolution.

I have been often surprized, when I reflected how wanting we were to ourselves, upon that Turn, in not retrieving and securing for ever, by the Claim of Rights, our Ancient Constitution of frequent New Parliaments, which, in my poor Opinion, was much more Valuable than all that we claim'd besides; but we obtain'd this in Part, by the Act pass'd in the 6th Year of the Reign of King *William*, and which the Bill before us is intended to repeal; for by that Act, we are to have *new Parliaments*, at least once in *three Years*; and even this is such a Security to the *British Liberties*, that all the Objections against *Triennial Elections* are but very Trifles, when compar'd with that: Therefore I am not a little surpriz'd, when I hear Gentlemen say, That the *Triennial Act* is a new Constitution, and that the Repeal intended thereof, will be but restoring the King in Part to his *Prerogative*, and setting the Constitution a little nearer to what it anciently was; surely, there is nothing further from the Truth of the Fact: The Antient Constitution was at least, *Annual new Parliaments*, and this was broke in upon, and that Breach afterwards continued in the Manner which I have already set forth; and by this Act, we have

have no new Privilege granted, but only restor'd in part, to those, which we always had a Right to. But were it in reality a new Grant; Shall we give it up, to enlarge only the Prerogatives of the Crown? May we not, in the same way of Reasoning, give up the *Habeas Corpus* Act, and all the other Privileges and Immunities, which have been obtain'd to the People from the Crown, from the Date of *Magna Charta*, to this very Day? This surely has not been the good Old way of Reasoning in this Place, and I presume, it will meet with due Discouragement at this Time. I hope we shall, on this, and all other Occasions, acquit our selves like *Britons*, and not give up, in *Complaisance* to any *Ministry*, the Smallest, much less, the Greatest and most Valuable Privilege of those we represent; and that we shall have the utmost Caution in making any Step, that may have the least Tendency towards that Slavery, from which, at the Risque of a Revolution, and an immense Expence of Blood and Treasure, we have so lately rescued our selves: I hope yet to live to see the Day, when our present Gracious Sovereign King *George* the First, will have the Glory to compleat the entire Restoring of our Ancient Constitution, to which his Predecessor King *William* the Third, hath made such a considerable Advance; and that instead of *Triennial*, we shall have *Annual new Parliaments*. Then indeed the *British* Liberties will be founded on a Rock, which the Machinations of the worst Ministries, will never be able to prevail against; and the Crown will be frequently and faithfully informed of the Sentiments of the People, and be thereby enabled to preserve with them that Confidence, and good Correspondence, so absolutely necessary for the Happiness of both: To this I may add, that the Inconveniencies from *Triennial* Elections, will thereby be much more effectually redress'd and cur'd, than ever they will be, by passing the Bill before us, into a Law. Upon the whole therefore, I shall take leave to affirm, that we have at present an indisputable Right to *Triennial new Parliaments*, and a very just claim, for I know of no Law that has depriv'd us thereof, to *Annual* Elections.

But I have something to urge, as to the *Breach* of our *Trust* in the passing of this Law; it is agreed on all Sides, that whatever the Ancient Constitution might be, yet we were chosen when the Law for *Triennial Parliaments* was, as it is still, in Force; and, that we were, and could be chosen only for the Term of Three Years, if his Majesty should think fit to continue us so long; therefore, to continue our selves for a longer Term, would be a manifest deceiving of those who chose us, who expected, and could not but expect, at the end of Three Years to have the Opportunity of a new Choice, and to alter where they found themselves mistaken. It would also be a very great Injustice to many Thousands of others, who have a Right to offer their Service to their Country, and who, for the Honour of the Nation, I am

willing to hope, are in all Respects equally qualified for the Service, with us, who have at present the Honour to fill those Seats.

If this Bill were to enlarge only the Continuance of future Parliaments, I should give my Negative to it for the Reasons I have already mentioned, and yet in that Case, the Electors would have a fair Warning for what Time they were to choose, and those Elected, would be truly and properly the Representatives of the People; which I conceive cannot be said with Truth, of the present *Parliament*, if they should be continued beyond the 3 Years: This, to me, is an insuperable Objection against this Part of the Bill; for if we may add four Years to our present Term, may we not add Forty, may we not make our selves perpetual, or even extinguish Parliaments themselves? Nay, what is it which we may not do, or, after this Step, what is it which the People of *Great Britain* may not apprehend that we will do? Can we do any Thing much worse, than to subvert one of the Three Estates of the Realm, and to substitute a new one in the Place thereof, and instead of a House of *Commons* by the Choice of the People, as it always has been, and ever ought to be, to establish a *new kind of House of Commons*, and 'till now unheard of, by Act of Parliament?

The great Partiality which all Parties in their Turns have shewn in the Determination of Elections, has been too long the general Complaint, and one of the greatest Blemishes on the Justice and Conduct of the House of *Commons*; and 'tis certainly a crying Wickedness, and a most dangerous Practice; therefore I am willing to hope, that we shall not, by giving our Consent unto the Bill before us, out-do all that ever was done of this kind by former Parliaments. They have chosen only 30 or 40 Members for some particular Places, which is a trifling Peccadillo to what is now attempted, I mean, the choosing of 589 at once, for the whole Nation.

It has been said by some who have spoke in the Debate, " That we are chosen with full Power to consent to such Laws as we shall judge for the Benefit of the Nation; that there are no Restrictions or Limitations in our Powers; and that therefore we may pass such new Laws, or repeal such old Ones, and the *Triennial Act*, as well as any other, as we shall think expedient; and that by a Repeal of the *Triennial Act*, we shall, after the Three Years, still continue to be the Representatives of the People by Vertue of their former Choice, without any new Election for that Purpose. " This appears to me to be a plain begging of the Question, and a very fallacious way of Reasoning. I constitute a Person my Attorney with very large and general Powers for the Term of Three Years, and, no doubt, what he shall do pursuant to those Powers, during that Term, shall bind me, but what he shall afterwards do, is void; and it cannot be said, that by the general Words of doing all Act and Acts in my Name, that

that he is enabled to add Four Years more to the Continuance of His Power. I know there are great Disparities between such Powers; and those given by the People to their Representatives in Parliament; but yet, I think, that to the Purpose I intend it, the Parallel will hold. I will readily agree, that the Powers given by the People to their Representatives are very large, but I can by no means go the Length of some Gentlemen, to think them absolutely unlimited, or that such ill Use may not be made of this Power, as to amount to a Forfeiture thereof.

Our Histories are full of Instances, and we have a very late one, that *Kings themselves may be guilty of such an Abuse of their Power, as to forfeit the same, and give the People a Right to a new Choice*, and it will not, it cannot be said, that the immediate Creatures of the People, who have no Pretence to Power, but by Delegation from them, are more absolutely their Masters, or more independant than the Crown it self: Pray consider, whether we can be guilty of a greater Provocation to those we represent, than to deprive them for any Time, of being represented by their own Choice, and to change the Ancient third Estate of the Nation, into a new invented one, unknown to former Ages; and whether they will think a little Sophistry, and a few Finesses of Argument a sufficient Reparation for an Injury of so high a Nature.

But I have a much stronger Objection against this part of the Bill, and cannot help being yet of Opinion, That if it should go thro' all the Forms of an Act of Parliament, pass both Houses, and have the Royal Assent, that it will still remain a dead Letter, and not obtain the Force of a Law; for I am warranted by one of our greatest Lawyers, to affirm, " That an Act of Parliament may be void in it self, and if there are any Cases out of the Reach of the Legislature, this now before us must be admitted to be one; for what can be more against common Sense and Reason, than to be a *Felo de se*, to destroy that Constitution, or any essential part thereof, upon which our Existence in our political Capacity depends. I am also supported in this by the Authority of learned Divines; I shall mention but one, and I speak it for his Honour, the present Bishop of *Bangor*, who has unanswerably made it evident, " That all People have natural Rights, and " that a Free People have legal ones, which they may justly maintain, and which, no Legislative Authority whatsoever can deprive them of: " And can a Free People have a more valuable Right, than that of being fairly and frequently represented in Parliament, by Persons of their own choosing? This surely is a Right as valuable as Liberty it self, being absolutely necessary to the Subsistence and Continuance thereof.

For the Sake of those Gentlemen who seem so very fond of the unlimited Power of Parliaments, (and by which only they can support the Validity of such a Law, as the Bill before us is

intended to introduce) I shall mention some Cases, to which they themselves will agree, that this unlimited Power doth not, cannot extend. As for Instance, Suppose instead of the Bill before us, we should pass a Law, as was done in the Reign of *Richard the Second*, (the worst Prince that ever sat upon the *English* Throne) That the Power of both Houses should be vested in Twelve *Great Lords*! or, as some have done in the Reign of *Henry the Eighth* (the first proroguer of Parliaments) That the King's Proclamation, with the Consent of the Privy Council, should have the Force of Law: Or, as in 1641, That the Parliament should not be dissolved or prorogued without their own Consents; Such Laws as these, thro' Opposition and Violence, have been for some time submitted to, but surely no Gentleman will say, That they ever were, or, should they be now re-enacted, that they would be legally in Force; for if so, the Parliament of 1641 is still in Being, for I never heard that they gave their Consents to their own Dissolution.

I will suppose one Case more, which has never happened, and God forbid it ever should! That an Act of Parliament should pass to vest the whole Legislative Authority in the single Person of the Prince, to cloath him with an absolute Dictatorial Power, to extinguish for the future both Houses of Parliament, and all other Rights and Privileges of the People; and to put all Things, hereafter entirely into the Power, and to be disposed of at the Will and Pleasure of the Prince. I am sure no true *Briton* will ever say, That such an Act of Parliament as this, would have the least Validity or Force, or be any wise binding on the People: I am sure it would not, but instead thereof, would, in due Time, expose the *Authors of it to the just Vengeance of an injured Nation*; which I think is a full Proof of what I have affirmed, That the Powers given by the People to their Representatives, are not absolutely unlimited; nor the Power of the Parliament it self so Omnipotent, as some are willing to suppose them; I therefore hope no one will endeavour to support this Bill by such Arguments, as will equally support the Cases I have mention'd, and lead us into the most dangerous and unwarranted Paths; and on this Occasion, I shall take leave to put Gentlemen in Mind, That *France*, *Denmark*, and *Sweden*, were formerly Free Nations; and what their present Situation is, and how they have been reduced therto, is too well known, to need to be repeated.

I have been often much surpris'd at the Boldness of the *Roman* Clergy, in introducing the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; how they could have hop'd to prevail with their good Subjects the *Lati*ty, to believe so monstrous an Absurdity, and did not rather dread that it would stagger their Obedience, and occasion a general Revolt. But our Histories inform us, That this was done in an Age of the grossest Ignorance, and of the greatest Corruption of Manners: A proper Season for such an Undertaking! Accordingly

ly the *Popish* Clergy laid hold thereof, well knowing, that if they succeeded in this, their Empire was secured, and implicate Faith without Reserve, would be thereby for ever established; it being evident, That if this prodigious Camel was once swallowed down, it was impossible afterwards, that any Thing could stick. I cannot suppose, nay, it were monstrous to suppose, that our present *vertuous and UNCORRUPT Ministry*, can, by the Passing of this Bill, have any Design in view, parrallel to that of the *Romish* Clergy, to plain thereby the way to some other Laws, which may be thought necessary to the full Establishment of their Power. No certainly. They are too well satisfied of the Uprightness of their Conduct, to stand in need of any indirect Supports, and too penetrating, to think they could obtain them in a Parliament, where the Majority are so entirely independant of them, and who, in the present and former Parliaments, have approv'd themselves Champions for the Liberties of their Country: Besides, the present is so far from being an Age of the grossest Ignorance, that never was Learning at so high a Pitch, nor Men arriv'd to so noble a way of *Free-thinking*, that our *Motto* may justly be, *Nolumus jurare in verba Magistrum*; We scorn the musty Sayings of Antiquity, and will in nothing be pinn'd down by the Dictates of the Learned of this, or of any other Age; therefore 'tis impossible to suppose any such Design in the Bill before us, and yet, I am very sorry it hath been attempted, and hope it will never pass, for the Reasons I have already mentioned; and also least it should give too great a Handle to People without Doors, to entertain untoward Jealousies and Surmises; who, may be apt to say, That *those who can compliment a Ministry with such a Law, can never afterwards refuse them any Thing.*

I shall, on this Occasion, put Gentlemen in Mind of the great Debt, with which the Nation is incumbred; a Burthen, which is become almost insupportable, and ready to crush us into Ruin; and yet, to our great Misfortune, instead of diminishing, it is daily encreasing. I have long observ'd the fatal Methods, by which this Mischief was brought upon us: I was indeed in great Hopes, that the putting an eternal Stop to the further encrease of our Debt, and the settling the most proper Measures for the lessening thereof, in such Proportions, as in a reasonable Time might entirely discharge the same, would have been the very first Work of the present Parliament, as it was the most valuable for the Interest of the Nation; but, I'm sorry to see, it has hitherto given way to so many other Considerations, which, how important soever they may be thought, I will be bold to say, when compar'd to this, are but like the *Tything* of *Mint* and *Cummin*, to the *weightier Things of the Law*. Surely something must, and very soon too, be done in this Matter; for I am persuaded, no Man can be so Wicked, as to entertain a Thought of declaring the Nation Bankrupt, and paying off this Debt with a *Sponge*, to the utter Ruin of

of Thousands of Families; and, as little can I suppose any Man so stupid, as to sleep securely, whilst the Liberties of his Country, and thereby his own, and the Property of every single Person in the Nation, is in the most precarious Situation; for, should we, loaded as we are, be engaged in a new War with any powerful Enemy, must we not either submit to all the unreasonable Impositions of such an Enemy, or find some extraordinary Means to support such an expensive War? Will it not therefore be our Wisdom to put our Affairs as soon as possible, on such a Foot, as to make the Second part of the Dilemma practicable, without resorting to so black an Injustice as that I have hinted at, either of *Spunging* out all our past Debts, or at least of borrowing the Funds for the Use of the Publick, during the Continuance of such a War? This surely is a Subject of such Importance, that it will justify the Speaking of it, either Seasonably or not; nay, I think it never ought to be out of our Minds, 'till something very effectual be done therein; but I mention it chiefly at this Time, to divert Gentlemen from passing the Bill before us, and continuing the present Parliament, beyond the Term of Three Years; lest what shall be afterwards done in so great and so good a Work by this Parliament, if continued, may be liable to Objection, from the Doubts which the Nation may have of the Legality of such a Parliament; and for the same Purpose, I shall observe, that we seem Pinion'd down, for a long Tract of Years, and indeed for ever, in the Methods we proceed in, to a *Land Tax* of Two Shillings in the Pound, and to the *Malt*, to support such a Fleet, and such Guards and Garrisons, as in the profoundest Peace, I presume will be always esteemed necessary. The ancient Revenues of the Crown applicable to these Purposes, having long since been Mortgaged and sold away; and if our present unhappy Divisions, should for some Time require a greater Force, for the Quiet and Security of the Nation, even in Times of Peace; 'tis easy to compute how much higher the aforesaid Taxes will rise.

Let Gentlemen seriously consider, whether it will not greatly encrease the Uneasiness of the People, under such heavy Burthens, if they think they are laid upon them by Representatives whom they never chose. For my own Part, I dread the Consequence of such a Law as that which we are now about, and doubt it cannot be long supported in any other Manner, than those extraordinary Laws were for some Time, which I have already mentioned; and I am persuaded, 'tis far from the Design of any in this House, that this Law, if it pass, should be supported in that way; and to make a *Standing Army* necessary only to support a *Standing Parliament*; for to me they seem to be Sister Twins, which can only live, and must die together.

I have now given my several Reasons against this Bill, which appear to me so strong, as would engage my Negative to it were it even in some Measure conducive to the Ends which are pretended;

tended; but much more when I am thoroughly convinc'd, that it is so far from promoting those Ends, that if ever it pass into a Law, it will have a Tendency directly contrary.

It has been said, " That three Years is too short a Time to effect any thing of great Moment for the Service and Benefit of the Nation; That the first Sessions is generally spent and wasted away in the Determination of Elections; in the Second something is done; but that the last Sessions is usually as much lost as the first, Gentlemens Minds running so much on the ensuing Election, as to think of nothing else; and the Fear also of disobliging their Electors, on so near a View of a new Choice, becomes a very great Byass on their Conduct in Parliament, to the Prejudice of the publick Service; so that in this short Term of three Years, there is little more than the Work of one Year done.

I am not a little surprized, that such Assertions as these, shou'd be made use of, as Arguments against *Triennial* Parliaments; because it seems to me to be *protestatio contra factum*, as was said by a very great Man, of Dr. *Sacheverell's* Speech. It is evident, that the Business of the Publick was carried on for some hundreds of Years by *Annual Parliaments* only, and our Histories for that Time do not acquaint us with any Complaints made of the shortness of their Duration: And is it not most notorious, that there never were such great Things done by any Parliaments, as by those which have been holden since the *Triennial Act*? Was ever a War so long, and so successfully carried on before, and in which this Nation bore so great a Proportion of Expence? Were ever Sums so amazingly Great, given by any Parliament, or Parliaments before, in the like compass of Time, as has been done by these *Triennial* Parliaments? I affirm, there has been more given by them for the Supply of a single Year, than was given in the whole Reign of any of the Predecessors of the late King *William* the Third, and that the Expence of the publick Service since the Revolution, has amounted to more, than it did from the first Foundation of the *English* Monarchy, down to that Time; and I will venture the Word, that they were such Supplies, as could have been raised only by Parliaments of a short Continuance; for 'tis not supposable, that the Nation would have remained Quiet under such heavy Taxes, had the same been imposed by a *LONG Pensionary* Parliament, such as that of King *Charles* the Second; but, when they were convinced of the absolute Necessity of such Supplies, from the concurring Sentiments of frequent new Parliaments, they were by this, and, by this Method only, could have been disposed to the chearful Payment of the same; when this is seriously considered, I am persuaded, that no Gentleman will say, That *Triennial* Parliaments are incapable of doing great Things, when it is true beyond the possibility of Contradiction, that they have actually done much greater Things, than were ever done by Parliaments

liaments before: Let us but compare what was done by the long *Pensionary* Parliament of K. *Charles* the Second, and what has been done in a like Number of Years by *Triennial* Parliaments, and then the Preference will be easily determined: And surely Arguments from Matters of Fact and long Experience, ought to be of much greater Weight than those, which depend only on conjectural and ill grounded Surmises, and a fanciful Way of Reasoning.

I will agree, that much Time is spent, not only in the first, but in the Second Year, in the Determination of Elections; but if these were all without distinction, left to the Committee appointed for that, it wou'd not make so great a part of the Business of the House, as it has of late Years done: And if the Right of Election, for the several Cities and Boroughs were unalterably fix'd, and not chang'd from time to time, with respect to the Petitioners and sitting Members, the Work, even of the Committee, would be greatly lessened: And I must say, That whenever Gentlemen are in earnest, dispos'd to cure this Evil, it may be done to the Honour and Reputation of future Parliaments, and to the saving nine Parts in ten, of that Time, which has of late Years been consumed in the Business of Elections; and therefore surely this Inconveniency can be no Objection against *Triennial Parliaments*, which is not owing to that, but to very different Causes; and which cannot possibly be cured by the Repeal of the *Triennial Act*; but may be done, if not entirely, yet, in a great Measure by proper Provisions for that Purpose.

As to the Inconveniencies suggested to the Third Sessions of Parliament, from the near Approach of a new Choice; It will be much the same against the Second Sessions, in which something of Business is admitted to be done: for, I see but little difference between the Influence, which the Prospect of a new Choice will have, at the end of One, or at the End of Two Years. The Objection therefore, as to this Purpose, is altogether trifling; but I will agree, that it has its Weight, if it be urged for the *long Continuance*; and greater still, if it be urg'd for the *Perpetuating* the present Parliament; for, then indeed, Gentlemen would be freed from all Anxiety, about a future Election, and wou'd be under no Restraints, nor have any Biass on their Minds, from the Sentiments of those who chose them; but surely it ought not to be thus, nor is this a Compliment fit to be made to the Electors of *Great Britain*, but is far from being a suitable Return for the Honour they have done us; and 'tis monstrous to suppose, that we should render our selves disagreeable to the People, by a faithful Discharge of our Duty; and doing that which is best for the Interest of the Nation.

Surely we our selves in the first Part of this our first Sessions, notwithstanding all the Time spent in the Determination of Elections, have been able to find time to give all the necessary Supplies

plies for the Service of the Nation; but perhaps we have made some Discoveries in this Age unknown to former ones, we have a Glimpse of some Light undescribed before, yet, it will still be true, that this Light has sprung up but very lately among us. And altho' this Consideration cannot weaken the real Strength of the Argument, yet it lays it under the Imputation of Novelty, and will be a full Justification of the Integrity, if not of the Sagacity, of those who shall persevere in their Opposition to the Bill.

As to the Failure in the *Triennial Act* of answering the Expectations of the Nation, it has been only asserted in general Terms, and I cannot easily guess at what is particularly meant; for it has certainly answered all the Ends which from the Preamble* of the Act we can apprehend to have been expected by the Makers thereof, or which indeed, in the Nature of the Thing, cou'd have been expected from it; for, surely, the Grievance, which had been felt, of a very long Parliament is thereby redress'd, and the Constitution of *frequent new Parliaments*, in Part, retrieved, and brought nearer to what it anciently and originally was.

As to the encrease of *Bribery and Corruption* in Elections, since the *Triennial Act*, it is impossible it can be owing to that Law, or that it would be any wise diminished by a Repeal thereof; and in Fact the Encrease of *Bribery and Corruption* in Elections may have happened since that Law, and yet be no wise a Consequence thereof; 'tis contrary to Common Sense to imagine, that those who would purchase their Seats in Parliament, would give more for a *Triennial*, than for a *Septennial one*, or for a *Continuance during Life*; or that such Electors, who will sell their Voices, have not Arithmetick enough to proportion their Prices to the Times they choose their Representatives for; therefore this Objection against the *Triennial Act* is certainly very frivolous, unless something much further be intended, than I believe any *Briton* has yet the Courage to speak out, I mean, unless it be intended, before the Expiration of the Seven Years, to add a further Term by another Act, and so on: Then indeed there is an effectual stop put to all future Bribery and Corruption in Elections, and the last Election which the People had, was to be the last they were ever to have.

This brings to my Mind a very scandalous Pamphlet, which came out a little before the Election of the present Parliament, I think the Title of it is *English Advice to the Freeholders of ENGLAND*: This Author takes great Pains to divert the People of England from choosing a certain Party of Men whom he unjustly paints in very black Colours; and amongst others, there is an Expression to this Effect, " Don't give your Vote for one of these People,

D

" whatever

“ whatever they may offer you, for depend upon it, if there shou’d
 “ be a Majority of them in Parliament, it is the last Vote you
 “ will ever have the Opportunity to give. ” I am persuaded, ’tis
 far from the Intentions of any Gentleman here, to contribute to
 the Credit and Reputation of that Author, by giving even a Co-
 lour of probability to the Truth of any of his *Predictions*; and
 this I hope will also have some Weight to prevent a Repeal of the
Triennial Act; since that will have the Air of the first bold step
 towards the fulfilling of this wicked *Prophecy*; and the making
 use of the Argument I have been endeavouring to explode, will
 not a little heighten the Suspicion; it being evidently of no Force
 in any other View, but that of carrying the Matter to the Length,
 which this Author has foretold. But surely, Gentlemen need not
 thus hunt about either for the Cause or the Cure of *Bribery* and
Corruption in Elections.

On the late happy Revolution, by which our Religion and Li-
 berties were preserved, we were unavoidably engaged into a very
 expensive War; and had it been carry’d on by Supplies within the
 Year, as it is evident, it might have been, our War and our Taxes
 would have ended together; and we should have been then as
 able, when justly provoked thereto, to begin a second War, as
 we were to undertake a First. But unhappily for *England*, this
 Method was not pursued; but instead thereof, the Nation was
 by piece-meal exposed to Sale; and execrable surely will their
Names be to *latest Posterity*, who at first began, or have been
 since, the chief Supporters of this accursed Practice, by which,
 one third Part at least of the great Sums given, have been lost to
 the Service of the Nation, which now remains loaded with a
 Debt of *fifty Millions*; besides, at least the Sum of *seventy Millions*,
 which has been actually rais’d and paid. From hence it followed,
 that by the great Burthens on our Trade, a new Spring of Com-
 merce more secure and beneficial having arisen, I mean, the *Pub-
 lick Funds*, almost the whole numerous Body of our wealthy *En-
 glish* Merchants, who were formerly the Glory of our own, and
 the Envy of other Nations, have thrown all their Money into this
 new Channel, and have left the ancient Trade, from which *Only*,
 the Wealth of the Nation can arise, to be carried on by Men of
 small Fortunes, who, Trading only upon Credit, are little more
 than Factors for the Manufactures of *England*, who by this un-
 natural Transmigration, are now become the Merchants of the
 Kingdom; and under these Disadvantages a great Part of our
 Trade, which was formerly carried on with Vigour, by our own,
 is now fallen into the Hands of Foreign wealthy Merchants, and,
 I am afraid, irreparably lost to us; the inevitable Consequence of
 which hath been, Ruin to Thousands and Thousands of *British*
 Families. And ’tis as evident, that by the long Continuance of
 the

the Land and Malt Taxes, and the high Prices of all things by the Addition of new Excises, the greater part of the middling Gentry of the Kingdom, are half undone; and even our greatest Commoners, and the Nobility themselves have very sensibly felt these Pressures upon the Publick; and, if the Distress more or less, has become almost Universal, no Wonder if it has plained the Way to Bribery and Corruption, and dispos'd those who had the Opportunities of doing it, to partake of the general Plunder, and to repair their own, at the Expence of the publick Losses.

The *Funds*, as I am informed, produce above Three Millions yearly, towards the Interest, and sinking of some part of the Principal of our Debt: This great Additional Revenue, tho' the Property of private Persons, is entirely under the Management of the Officers of the Crown, and thereby a Dependence vastly greater, on a Ministry, has been created, than ever was before, or could otherwise have been; and what Influence this has had on our Elections throughout the whole Kingdom, the Acts of Parliament which have been made to prevent the same, sufficiently proclaim; We have now an *Army of Civil Officers*, as dangerous as any *Military Force*, entirely at the *Devotion of a Ministry*; and altho' we may run no Risk from this, in the Hands where his Majesty has now plac'd the Administration, yet, we have formerly been, and may again be in Peril, from this adventitious Power, of the total Loss of our Constitution.

The short of the Case seems to me to be, That some Ministers have by their Conduct, gone a great way to Beggar the Nation; and others have corrupted those who have been so undone: And in this unhappy Situation of Men and Things, the publick Money has been employ'd to corrupt Electors, and returning Officers, and thereby have fill'd some late Parliaments with the Creatures of a Ministry, and many have likewise expended vast Sums of their own, when they saw it necessary to get or secure a Place; and by this means, these *Parliaments* have been filled with great Numbers of *Mercenary Troops*, whose Names were scarce known in the Countries where they were chosen, and without any Family Interests of their own, or the Assistance of those who had; and if there has been any Bribery on the Parts of those who have oppos'd such Men, as perhaps there may, it has been occasioned by the vile Arts which have been put in Practice against them: So I think I may truly affirm, That *Bribery* and *Corruption* in Elections, have not followed, as any Consequence of the *Triennial Act*, but from Causes widely different; and that the Foundation thereof was at first laid, and has been since improved and carry'd on by *wicked and designing Ministers*. As to the Cure of this Evil, I am afraid, it cannot be thoroughly effected, whilst the Nation labours under the present heavy Load of Debt; and for this and many other Reasons, it does not a little concern us,

to make all the Progress we possibly can, in so great and so good a Work, as is the Discharge thereof.

As to the Heats and Animosities, which are likewise charged to the Account of the Triennial Act, and the Burthen and Grievance of frequent Expensive Elections, I shall readily agree, That the Frequency of Elections is directly intended and design'd by the Triennial Act, to prevent the mischievous Consequences of *long Continu'd Parliaments*: But surely no one will say, That this, simply and abstractedly, is a Burthen or Grievance; and as to the great Expence in Elections, and the violent Heats and Animosities about them, they are not in the least owing to the Triennial Act, as I have already shewn: And I presume no Gentleman wou'd desire to extinguish the Ancient *English* Hospitality, for which the Nation has been so long fam'd; nor can any Man imagine it more possible to cure all Heats and Animosities in Elections, than to prevent Contentions about them, which the laudable Ambition of serving the Nation hath formerly kept up, and I hope it will do so again, without the help of any other Motives; but besides, I am persuaded, that Contentions arising from so worthy a Principle, and the Old *English* Hospitality, will do no harm. It is strange, that any One Gentlemen can fancy, that the passing the Bill before us into a Law, wou'd cool our Heats, and settle us all in Tranquillity; it seems to me to be calculated for the direct contrary Purposes; to blow up the Flame, and to fill up the Measure of the Nation's Discontents; for 'tis impossible to conceive, that the Electors of *Great-Britain*, of whatever Party or Denomination they may be, will not be highly incens'd by such a Law as this; and if they should universally turn their Resentments against those, who without their Choice, have made themselves the Representatives of the People: I leave Gentlemen to judge, whether this wou'd not be an Animosity of a much more dangerous Consequence, than that which we are pretending to extinguish by this Bill.

It is also urg'd, That these frequent Elections are a great Encouragement to the *Idleness and Debauchery* of the *meanest and lowest* of the People; Opportunities only to gratifie the Drunkenness and Lewdness of the Mob. I am sorry that there are any Excesses, to give Foundation for this Complaint; but surely the Evil proceeds from the same Cause, and must be cur'd in the same way with those others, which I have already taken Notice of, to have been objected to the *Triennial Act*. And I mention this now, only to observe, what pretty *Epithets* are given to the *Electors* of *Great Britain*. It was with Concern, that I heard them lately treated in this Manner in another Place, but could never have believed it possible to have heard any thing like it hinted within these Walls. How low and mean soever they may be, they are still the People of *Great Britain*, and we are one of the Three Estates of the Realm, by a Power derived and delegated from them: And are we then, only the Representatives of a *lewd, drunken, debauch'd*

debauch'd Mob? To paint out the *Commons* of *Great Britain*, in such contemptible Colours, is surely doing great Dishonour to our selves, and is equally ungrateful and unjust to them. I think we represent all the *Commons* of *Great Britain*, and surely amongst them, there are many Thousands every way as well qualified to fill these Seats, as we who have now the Honour to do it: And even, as to those of an inferiour Rank, it must be own'd, that they are a *Brave* and a *Gallant People*; and when we compare them with those of other Countries, we have Reason to be in Raptures with our own happy Constitution, which has made such a Difference between them and other Men. They are bred up from their Cradles with deep Impressions of Liberty, and have their Properties fenc'd in, and secured by Law; and by their Representatives in Parliament, they have the Honour to share, even in the *Legislative Authority*; and 'tis this gives our People the Spirit and Resolution of the ancient *Romans*, by which our Nation has obtain'd and preserv'd its great Character in the World.

It is thus we ought to describe the People of *Great Britain*, and we shall then only do them the Justice they deserve: But if on the contrary, we show an Inclination to depreciate their Value, and seem to be ashamed of those we represent, will it not, especially if we pass the Bill now before us, give the strongest Jealousy, that we intend to represent them no more, but to set up for the future, a *third Estate entirely independant of them*. And this Jealousy will be still encreased, by what has been with too great Freedom discours'd of without Doors, That People must be governed by their Fears, and surely, so they must, if this Bill pass, for I think it will be scarce possible afterwards to govern them by LOVE: Unhappy *Britain!* To have brought forth Children so unnatural, as to treat Thee thus: For whatever may have been put in Practice in former Times, the Doctrine of Slavery was never so openly avowed before: What, *Govern a Free People by their Fears!* Monstrous Expression! and certainly a form'd Design corresponding thereto, is an Act of Treachery, as foul and black, as a *Briton* can be guilty of: A high Crime and Misdemeanour it certainly is, I will not call it High Treason, because I know no Law of the Land, which has yet declared it so.

The Argument which I shall next take Notice of, is that which seems to me to be mentioned as the chief Inducement in the Preamble of the Bill, and which has been chiefly insisted upon by the Gentlemen who have spoken for it; "Because of the Danger from the general Discontents, and great Disaffection of the People, which some Gentlemen are apprehensive, were a Parliament now to be called, would produce a Majority of very different Sentiments from those who now compose it: Others, who think better of the Inclinations of the People, believe, that this wicked Work could not be accomplished without the Help of Foreign Money to Bribe and Corrupt the Electors of Great Britain;

“ *Britain*; but upon the whole, are of Opinion, that the thing
 “ would be effected; and that instead of the present Excellent
 “ House of Commons, so devoted to the true Interest of their
 “ Country, and to the Support of his Majesty, and the Protestant
 “ Succession, we should greatly risque the having such a Parli-
 “ ament as would be ready to call in the Pretender, and to deliver
 “ up their Country to Popery and Arbitrary Power; and there-
 “ fore those who are against the Bill, are charg’d with contribu-
 “ ting to his Design, altho’ they are charitably believed no wise
 “ to intend the Thing. ” And this I think is the full Import of
 what has been said by Gentlemen on this Head of Argument.

As to the Danger which some Gentlemen imagine of an ill
 Parliament, were it now to be chosen, from the help of *French*
 Money, it is in my Opinion, a Reproach to the present Ministry,
 to fancy that they wou’d be out-done, or out-witted by *France* in
 this, or in any other way; and I think that the shunning of such
 an Attempt, is the only Case, in which a Ministry might un-
 blameably apply the publick Money in the Business of Elections;
 I wish it never had been, or may be done on any other Occasi-
 on. But why do Gentlemen believe, that the *Regent* of *France*
 will meddle in our Elections? Surely not long since he had a
 much better Opportunity to have distress’d us, had he been so dis-
 pos’d. On other Occasions we hear, I mean without Doors, of
 the good Understanding between his Majesty, and that Prince;
 and that the Pretender will very soon be oblig’d to travel beyond
 the *Alps*; and this certainly is highly probable, if the *Regent* have
 any *Expectations* of being himself one Day *King of France*. I
 shall say no more of this, and believe those, who made the Ob-
 jection, scarce expected that any one would have taken so much
 notice of it.

As to the Danger of an ill Parliament, from the great Disaffe-
 ction of the People; This, I confess, is a most extraordinary and
 surprizing Argument, and such as I never thought I shou’d have
 heard in this Place; for it is an open Declaration and Acknowledg-
 ment, that the People of *Great Britain*, are not truly Represented
 at this time; That the present House of Commons are the Suppor-
 ters of the Liberties and true Interest of the People, which the
 People themselves are endeavouring to destroy, and wou’d effectua-
 lly do so by a new Choice; and therefore they are to be treated
 like *indiscreet Children*, and not to have their frowardness hu-
 mour’d at the Price of their undoing. This indeed is telling the
 People of *Great Britain*, in the plainest Terms, that as they are not
 at present truly Represented by those whom they did choose, so
 for the future, they shall be Represented *without any Choice at all*.
 If this be the way to Ingratiate with the People, what is it which
 can give them a Disgust? No, certainly this must make it abso-
 lutely necessary to govern them by their Fears, and to take such
 Measures as are proper for that Purpose; a Design so black, that

I cannot

I cannot suppose it has yet entered into the Heart of any *Briton*.

It is amazing to hear this very Suggestion, in my Opinion far distant from the Truth, not only on the Present, but on other Occasions, so frequently made use of as an Argument; for were it really true, can it be any Service to the Publick to be making daily and hourly Proclamation thereof? For can this be a proper and a likely Means to strengthen the Hands of his Majesty, and his faithful Subjects, or to weaken those of the Pretender, and his foreign and domestick Friends, to publish to all the World (for what is said in this Place, can be a Secret no where) that the Disaffections to his Majesty is very General, and the Party of the Pretender so considerable in the Nation, as to risque another Rebellion in his Favour, if they had the Opportunity of assembling together in Numbers on a new Election, or any other Opportunity equally propitious to their Purpose; and if this did not happen, that still there wou'd be Danger, that the Majority on a New Election, wou'd be in the Interest of the Pretender; and that this wou'd not be less, perhaps might be more fatal, even than Rebellion. A Bill founded on such Surmises as these, and Supported with such Arguments, is highly dangerous, and if it passes into a Law, its Title ought to be, *An Act for the most effectual Encouragement of the Pretender and his Allies, to invade this Kingdom*; in my Conscience, I believe it so, and that so it will be found, if this Bill should pass into an a Law.

I believe it will be admitted, that from the first Establishment of the Succession, until it happily took Place, a vast Majority of People express'd the greatest Zeal for it, and Satisfaction in it; That from the Death of the Queen, to the arrival of his Majesty, the Nation was never known to be in a greater Calm. That the Parliament then in being unanimously settled the Civil List for the support of the Dignity of the Crown, and compleated what was wanting for the Supplies of that Year; and whatever Faults they might have been guilty of before, there was nothing now wanting in the expressing of their Duty; and it has been surmis'd, that some Persons whose Zeal for his Majesty cannot be suspected, were not a little apprehensive, that that Parliament, and the Party of which their Majority was compos'd, wou'd, to make amends for their past Conduct, go too great lengths in their *Complaisance* to the Crown; and that for this very Reason, it was dangerous for the Nation, that his Majesty shou'd ever meet them; but whatever the Reasons were, certain it is, that his Majesty saw them not. The Joy on his Majesty's Arrival was as Great and Universal, as was ever known in *Britain*; and from hence I think I may fairly conclude, that if there be such a Disaffection as is suggested, since it was not before, it must have happened since his Majesty's Arrival; and if this can be imagined possible, it must be then agreed, that such a general Disaffection is an Effect too considerable

considerable to be produc'd without any, or by a very slight Cause; his Majesty surely can be no wise the Cause of so surprizing a Change, as is surmis'd, in the Inclinations of his People; therefore if there be such a Disaffection, it can be only to the Ministers, and produc'd from something really ill, or which is apprehended to be so, in their Conduct. I am perswaded that they themselves have too much Modesty, not to agree, that 'tis much more reasonable to suppose a Disaffection to them, than to the Person of the King; and I doubt not but this House will always *distinguish*, as they have hitherto done, *between the Sovereign and the Ministers of State*.

But in Justice to the present Ministry, we must conclude, that the Disaffection to them is occasioned only by imaginary, and not by any real Evils done by them; and we have great Reason to hope, that by their wise and prudent Management, they will be able in a very little Time, to undeceive a mistaken and deluded People, and thereby regain those Affections, which, for the present, they apprehend to be lost to them. And if they shou'd fail in this, I am perswaded, from their great *Zeal for the quiet of the King, and Welfare of their Country*, from their known *Disinterestedness*, their *generous contempt of Advantages to themselves*, and from that *ancient Heroic Roman Vertue*, which so visibly appears in every part of their Conduct, that they themselves wou'd become Suppliants to his Majesty for Liberty to retire from the burthen of their Trust, and to repose the same into such Hands, as might put an end to the Disaffections which are now complained of. And I am the more confirmed in this Opinion, because I my self have heard some of the greatest Men now in Power, before they were so, express themselves in such a manner, as left me no room to doubt of the Sincerity of such a Disposition.

There is yet one part of the Objection which I have not touch'd upon, the Danger which is apprehended of an Invasion from Abroad, and the Insurrection at Home, should a New Parliament be called at this time; and this, I think, is the only Thing which I have heard mentioned, which has the colour of an Argument for a longer continuance of the present Parliament; but I believe, when 'tis a little examined, it will appear to have the Colour only, and to be *Vox & preterea nihil*. I think I have already made it evident, that there is no such Disaffection to his Majesty, or his Royal Family, as is suggested, and if there be not, then the danger of any Invasion or Insurrection on that Supposition, falls entirely to the Ground. But even admitting the Disaffection to be as it is suggested, 'tis still agreed, that the whole Nation is not Disaffected, but only some part thereof; and that therefore the meeting together, on the occasions of Elections (which are not made all on the same Day) wou'd consist of mixt Multitudes of well, and of ill-affected Persons, so that the former might ballance the latter.

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But admitting that not only the Disaffection is, but that the calling of a New Parliament at this time, wou'd be, as the same have been Represented, yet this will not prove that there's any Necessity at this time for the passing the Bill, which is the Subject of our present Debate. I do most readily agree, that if this Parliament were to expire in a very short time, and that the publick Meeting of the People would really be of such a dangerous Consequence in the present Juncture, as has been mentioned; That then absolute Necessity which always has been, and ever will be, a Justification of extraordinary Steps, would equally justify the prolongation for a Time, of the present Parliament, in the Manner now propos'd; and no doubt but that the next succeeding Parliament conven'd in the usual legal Manner, wou'd approve and confirm what shou'd be done in this, on so pressing an Occasion. But surely it will no wise follow, because this might be done in a Case of absolute Necessity, that therefore it may or ought to be done, when there is no Necessity at all. And it is evident, that there is no immediate necessity for the passing of this Law, since, notwithstanding the Length of the first, his Majesty may still have two Sessions more of this very Parliament; and will it not be time enough to pass such a Law in the last Sessions, if it should then appear as necessary as it is now pretended to be? And therefore admitting every thing which has been alledged, there is not the Colour of a Necessity for such a Law at present; and this gives me strong Suspicion, that there is a *Snake in the Grass*, and that we have not yet been acquainted with the true Reason of so unprecedented an Attempt. Certainly no Gentleman can be afraid of what every Gentleman must wish, that before the end of another Year, our ferment will subside, and the Nation be restored to a perfect Calm, which would entirely take away all pretences of doing what is now endeavoured: Or, that the unanimous Voice of the *Electors of Great Britain*, against such a Law, would, before another Session, be found too strong to be resisted by their Representatives, and that Gentlemen, upon a more mature Consideration, might come to think very differently of this Matter from what they at present may; and that therefore this great Master-piece must be struck off at one Heat, and that now or never must be the Word: Or may not others without Doors be apt to suspect, that this Law is really intended to encourage the Pretender to invade, and his secret Friends to shew themselves in publick; by soothing them up in the Hopes and Belief of the Greatness of their Numbers; and by leading them into that Snare, have an Opportunity of discovering and crushing them as thoroughly in *England*, as we have lately done in *Scotland*; and thereby secure for ever the Peace and Tranquillity of the whole Kingdom? For it is impossible to imagine, that such Encouragement would be given to the Pretender or his Friends, as seems to be done by the Preamble of this Bill, and the Debate of this Day, if those who were for the Bill

were not entirely satisfied, that a new Rebellion, if it should happen, would be attended only with the Consequences I have just now mentioned. How right a Design of this kind may be in Politicks, I will not pretend to determine, but will venture to affirm, that it is entirely inconsistent with the Christian Religion, and the Principles of Humanity, common to all Mankind.

But besides, I think an Experiment of this kind much too dangerous to be try'd; for, when the Fire is once kindled, no humane Wisdom can tell how much it may consume. And altho' we have happily suppress'd the late unnatural Rebellion, yet, I am persuaded, no Wise Man can wish, to serve any End whatever, to see the Nation expos'd again, to the Risque of such another Attempt, altho' it should be as ill concerted at Home, and as little supported from Abroad, as the last seems to have been. Such Motives as these, therefore, can surely prevail with no Body, and yet I am not able to guess at those which shou'd: And where no visible Reason does appear, for so violent and needless a Precipitation, there must, and will be great Variety of Conjectures at those which are not seen.

Another Argument, seems to have great Weight with some Gentlemen for the passing of this Bill; "That it will encourage Foreign Princes and States to enter into Alliances with us, when they see a certain fix'd Administration, on which they may depend; for that at present they look upon us to be in the Nature only of a *Triennial Government*, a New Parliament being usually attended with a new Ministry, and a new Ministry with new Measures.

I believe that this is the first, and I hope it will be the last Time that ever an Argument of such a Nature was advanc'd, or would have been endur'd in any *English* or *British* Parliament. We have hitherto been able to form great Alliances, and to do great Things, on the Foot of our ancient Constitution. And are we now sunk to a Condition so despicably low, as to be obliged to model it to the Genius or Humour of any of our Neighbours? Can a *Briton* hear this with Patience? Absolute Monarchy, and despotick Power have no Doubt, in some Conjunctions, the Advantage of our Form of Government; but shall we, for the Sake thereof, give up the most valuable Constitution upon Earth? So adapted to the Spirit of our People, and so well suited, in the general Circumstances of Life, for the Welfare and Happiness of a Free Nation, and by which we have hitherto shone forth with a distinguishing Lustre from all other Countries in the World. But as to the Argument it self, why do Gentlemen imagine, that *Triennial Parliaments* necessarily infer a *Triennial Government*? Surely the executive Power is entirely in the Prince; there the Laws of the Land have placed it, and there I hope it will for ever remain; The Power of Peace, War, and Alliances, are the undoubted Prerogatives of the Crown, and no Parliament,

I hope

I hope, will ever pretend to dispute the same. The Stability therefore of our Government, as it relates to Foreign Nations, depends entirely on the Prince: And, I believe, our ancient Allies never had, nor had Reason to have, a greater Reliance on any *British* Monarch, than on his present Majesty, who so worthily fills the Throne; and, I hope, that Reliance will never be transfer'd from him to any Ministry, supported by any Parliament whatever; which I think would be of the most dangerous Consequence to the Royal Dignity, the Liberties of the People, and to the true Interests of all our sincere Foreign Friends. But I am also at a Loss to find out any necessary Connexion between a *New Parliament* and a *New Ministry*, were there any Weight in that Objection; for, are not the publick Employments in the Disposal of the King, and whilst they are executed to his Satisfaction, will be continued in the same Hands? And when they are not, 'tis unfit they should. And whatever Changes his Majesty may at any time happen to make, I am perswaded, they will be always such, as will be most for his own Service, and the Welfare of the Kingdom. And I must declare the same Opinion as to Employments, as I have done with Relation to Seats in Parliament: That there are great Numbers in *Britain*, every way as well qualified for them, as the present Possessors; and, how great soever my Esteem may be for the *present Ministry*, I can't carry my Compliment so far, as to think, that the Nation would be *undone*, if they were *laid aside*. But if by the passing of this Law, the present Ministry should be effectually establish'd, which is more than any Man can pretend to prophecy, what Encouragement could this in Reality give to the forming of Foreign Alliances; when by the same Law 'tis fully insinuated, and plainly admitted in the present Debate, That the Affections of a very great Part of the People are lost to this very Ministry; for my own part, I think it is doing them the greatest Wrong, and furnishing Foreign Princes and States with the strongest Arguments against entering into any Alliance with us. For it is not their being supported by a Majority of this House, that will be any substantial Encouragement, if it is believed, that a Majority of the Nation are in very different Sentiments.

Five hundred and fifty nine Gentlemen of *Britain*, abstractedly considered, were they all Unanimous, bear but a small Proportion to the Numbers in the Nation; but when they sit within these Walls, cloathed with the Authority of the People, and are thought to speak their Sense; 'tis then indeed, that they will have the full weight of the Commons of *Great Britain*. It is evident, that the present Ministry and Parliament were in being, when the late Rebellion broke out, and that notwithstanding of all other proper Measures, Six Thousand *Dutch* Troops were thought necessary towards the Suppressing thereof; they had not certainly been otherwise sent for, nor would any *Briton* have dar'd to have given such Advice; what Judgment then must that, and other States and

Princes form from hence, of the Situation of our Affairs; especially when by this Law, we proclaim aloud, that our Heats and Animosities do still continue, and that there are still very dangerous Dispositions towards a new Rebellion; and if this be an Encouragement to enter into, and depend upon our Alliances, I know not what can be a proper Discouragement.

I am therefore in hopes that this Bill will not pass. Instead of such extraordinary and unnatural Projects as these, there are others that deserve our Attention. I think it would be a Design worthy of a *British* Parliament, to concert and execute the most proper Measures, for the healing up of our Breaches, and uniting our Minds for the common Interest and Safety of the Nation. The first Step absolutely necessary towards this great Work, seems to me to be, the forgetting all past Party-Quarrels, and extinguishing for the future, those odious Names of Distinction, which have been so long, and so unhappily kept up. And I will venture to say, that this Expedient towards Unanimity, is much more Christian, less Dangerous, and, tho' Difficult, yet much more Practicable, than the Extirpation, or total Suppression of either of the contending Parties, which the unthinking Furioso's of both seem to be too fond of.

I wou'd not have Gentlemen discourag'd, in endeavouring what I recommend, from any Difficulties, which they may conceive therein; for surely *there was a Time, and not long since*, when this blessed Work cou'd not have Miscarried; I hope it is still Practicable, or else the Nation will be soon undone; for, we are sure, that a Kingdom divided against it self, will be brought to Desolation. But as to the possibility of the Thing, let me put Gentlemen in mind of the great Heats and Animosities, which were raised and continued by the unexampled Violences and Cruelties of a long and bloody Civil War; yet these were all appeas'd in the very beginning of the Reign of King *Charles* the Second, after his Restoration; the History of that time being sufficiently known, I need not repeat the Measures which were then taken; certain it is, the Nation enjoy'd a Calm for many Years, our Trade flourish'd, our Wealth encreas'd, and we were both in the Literal and Allegorical Sense, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey; and this I hope will be again our Case. I wou'd also recommend the payment of our publick Debts, or at least of putting them in a way of being discharg'd in some reasonable time; for 'till this is done, we are in my Opinion, in a State of the greatest Insecurity; for what Foreign Prince or State, will either court the Friendship, or dread the Enmity of a Bankrupt People? For tho' particular Persons are really Rich, the Nation, whilst loaded with a Debt of Fifty Millions, is undoubtedly very Poor; and is it not a melancholy Consideration, that when the Individuals are very Wealthy, that yet the Nation shou'd be very weak; this is indeed a Paradox; but greater still, that Men can be so Insatuated, as to sleep secure under a Government,

Government, which can scarce be said to be in a condition of giving them Protection, and that too, when it is in their own power to Redress the Evil.

Before I sit down, I must observe, that this Bill is brought in by no Order of this House, nor has arose on any Motion in it, but is a *Present* sent us by the *House of Peers*. I do not say, that their Lordships have not a Right to send us this, or any other Bill they please, a Money-Bill excepted; but since it chiefly, if not wholly relates to our own, and the Rights and Privileges of those we Represent, it wou'd more naturally, in my Opinion, have had its Commencement here; and this Consideration inclines me to believe, that it had not been easie to have found one among us, who wou'd have been willing to have made himself Remarkable, by being the first Mover of so extraordinary a Law, so likely to disgust a vast Majority of the People. But there are other Reasons assign'd, and pretty freely talk'd of without Doors, for beginning this Bill in the House of Lords; that thereby time wou'd be got, and *proper Arguments applied*, to convince Gentlemen of the necessity of this Law, who, when it was first spoke of, seem'd to be very much prejudic'd against it; and 'tis said, that there has been great pains taken for that Purpose, and not without Success. But 'tis said, that the main Reason against beginning it here, was to take off that Byass, which was apprehended might be upon the Minds of Gentlemen, from the doubtfulness of it's Fate in another Place; for tho' the Lords have, we have not an Inheritance in our Seats, but depend for a Continuance of them in future Parliaments, on the good Opinions of the Electors of *Great Britain*; and to deprived them of the Right of frequent Elections, which they are now entituled to by Law, cannot be suppos'd a proper Recommendation to their Favour; and it was therefore convenient to remove this Stumbling-Block out of the way, that the Advocates for the Bill might Argue and Vote with greater Assurance. But I hope the Resolutions of this Day will fully make appear, how false and groundless these and such like Suggestions are, and that we cannot be deterred from a faithful discharge of the Trust repos'd in us, or influenced against it, by any Motives or Considerations whatsoever; and that those Gentlemen particularly, who have sat long in Parliament, and on all Occasions, have so worthily distinguish'd themselves by being the greatest Advocates for the Rights and Liberties of the People, will at this time shew the World, that they continue fix'd and steady to the Principles they have always profess'd. *I therefore hope, that a Law which even the worst Ministry, in the worst of Parliaments, never had the wickedness to Attempt, will not actually be establish'd under the BEST Administration, and in the BEST Parliament with which this Nation was ever Bless'd.*

(02)

